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Three Outstanding Faculty Members to be Honored at Commencement

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Three Outstanding Faculty Members to be Honored at Commencement

Quick Facts

- During the May 4 undergraduate commencement ceremony, President Anthony DiGiorgio will bestow the Distinguished Professor Award on Marilyn Smith, professor of management, and the Outstanding Junior Professor Award to Joseph Rusinko, assistant professor of mathematics.
- On May 2, DiGiorgio will present the LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award to Jane Thomas, a marketing professor in the College of Business Administration.



Marilyn Smith

ROCK HILL, S.C. - The three Winthrop University faculty members to be honored during upcoming graduation exercises are known for their creativity, their outstanding scholarship and their innovative service to others.

During the May 4 undergraduate commencement ceremony, **President Anthony DiGiorgio** will bestow the **Distinguished Professor Award** on **Marilyn Smith**, professor of management, and the **Outstanding Junior Professor Award** to **Joseph Rusinko**, assistant professor of mathematics. The ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. at the **Winthrop Coliseum** to confer bachelor's degrees to more than 650 students.



Joseph Rusinko

On May 2, DiGiorgio will present the **LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award** to **Jane Thomas**, a marketing professor in the **College of Business Administration**. The presentation will occur during the 7 p.m. graduate commencement ceremony at the **Winthrop Coliseum**, where master's or specialist degrees will be given to more than 240 students.

Learn more about these inspiring professors:



Jane Thomas

Distinguished Professor Award

Marilyn Smith, professor of management in the College of Business Administration and whose areas of concentration are operations management and business ethics, has been selected as the **2013 Distinguished Professor of the Year**.

As the highest honor Winthrop University bestows upon a faculty member, the award honors a faculty member for his or her superior skill in teaching, significant research or creative effort, high standing among professional colleagues and general service to the university.

Smith served as chair of the **Faculty Conference** and faculty representative to the **Winthrop Board of Trustees** from 2002 to 2005 and was instrumental in the implementation of the university's new general education program. She currently serves as coordinator for the **College of Business Administration's new sustainable business option** and co-chairs the college's effort to revise its undergraduate core curriculum. As a scholar, Smith produces articles that are related to quality management, general education, web-based learning, ethics and student development.

One of the greatest compliments about Smith's work came from her dean, **Roger Weikle**. "Although still an engineer when it comes to her methodical approach to administrate responsibly, the breadth of her activity and contributions make her the most flexible professor I can imagine," he wrote in

supporting Smith's nomination.

After receiving her B.S. in mathematics from **East Tennessee State University**, Smith worked in the area of statistical quality control for **Holston Defense Corporation**, then as an inventory control supervisor for **Burroughs Corporation**. She received her M.S. and Ph.D. in industrial engineering at **Virginia Tech**. Smith joined the faculty of the **College of Business Administration** in 1989.

Outstanding Junior Professor Award

Joseph Rusinko, an assistant professor in the **Department of Mathematics**, is the **2013 Outstanding Junior Professor**, an award given for inspired teaching, research excellence, and dedication to the welfare of students.

In addition to teaching a variety of courses within his department, Rusinko has taught **Principles of the Learning Academy** and **Human Experience classes**, as well as special topics courses. He is known for stimulating students' critical thinking in the classroom by using a wide range of examples and practical applications drawn from all disciplines.

Rusinko has been involved with undergraduate research projects in math education, mathematical biology and theoretical mathematics. In 2010, Rusinko coordinated Winthrop's **first-ever Summer Research Experience in Mathematics**. And, in 2012, he was awarded the **inaugural College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Undergraduate Research Mentor Award**.

While he is known for his dedication to undergraduate research, Rusinko has also served Winthrop on numerous committees such as the Office of Nationally Competitive Awards Advisory Committee, Undergraduate Research Committee and University General Education Committee. He serves students outside the classroom as a research mentor, faculty advisor for the men's club soccer team, and through his development of a student mathematics organization, **Nu Epsilon Rho Delta (NERDs)**.

Rusinko received his B.S. in mathematics and German from Davidson College in 2001. After working as an actuary in Charlotte, N.C., he attended the **University of Georgia**, where he earned his Ph.D. in mathematics in 2007. Upon graduation, he joined the **Department of Mathematics** at Winthrop.

LaRoche Graduate Faculty Award

Jane Thomas, professor of marketing with the **College of Business Administration**, is an outstanding faculty member who contributes greatly to the university's graduate program development, is innovative in her teaching and improves student learning through a variety of ways. The award, established in 2008, recognizes outstanding teaching at the graduate level and significant contributions to graduate education at Winthrop. It is named in honor of **Board of Trustees member Dr. Jane LaRoche**, class of 1970, of Camden, S.C.

Thomas joined Winthrop's business college in 1990 after completing her Ph.D. at the **University of North Carolina at Greensboro** in apparel marketing, having already earned a B.S. at **Meredith College** and an M.S. from the **University of Georgia** in clothing & textiles. She earned tenure and promotion to associate professor in 1996 and to professor in 2004.

Thomas, who is known for her special gifts in integrating traditional coursework with hands-on experiences for her students, is the recipient of multiple teaching and scholarship awards. She was selected as the **William H. Grier Professor** for the College of Business Administration from 2006-2010, the 2008 recipient of **Winthrop's Kinard Teaching Award** and the **2005 Wachovia Teaching Award**. In the community, Thomas was recognized by **Charlotte Business Magazine** as a **2009 Charlotte Business Woman Extraordinaire**.

Her M.B.A. marketing classes have completed 70 service learning projects since 2003 to help regional businesses and non-profit agencies improve their marketing efforts and appeal.

Since being granted tenure, Thomas has authored more than 20 articles in selective journals, written manuals for two textbooks, published 14 peer reviewed proceedings papers and delivered several other works to professional organizations. Thomas has been very skilled at connecting her research to teaching and other areas of student learning and career development for graduate students.

Her current research focuses on the pricing strategies used by discount apparel retailers and the sales volume of private brand apparel in department and specialty stores, as well as consumers' perceptions of value.

Last fall, the research she conducted along with **fellow faculty member Cara Peters** on the **Black Friday shopping experience** was widely distributed nationwide, including in the **Washington Post**.

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